

1 THE HONORABLE JOHN C. COUGHENOUR
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7 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
8 WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
9 AT SEATTLE

10 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

11 Plaintiff,

12 v.

13 GUOLONG LI,

14 Defendant.

CASE NO. CR20-0171-JCC-6

ORDER

15 This matter comes before the Court on the Defendant's unopposed motion to proceed
16 with a guilty plea by video or telephonic hearing. (Dkt. No. 218). The Court hereby GRANTS
17 the motion for the reasons explained below.

18 Under General Order 04-20, felony pleas and sentencing may proceed by video or
19 telephone conferencing if "the district judge in a particular case finds for specific reasons that the
20 plea or sentencing in that case cannot be further delayed without serious harm to the interests of
21 justice." W.D. Wash. General Order 04-20 (March 30, 2020); *see also* W.D. Wash. General
22 Order 14-21 (Dec. 22, 2021) (extending duration of General Order 04-20).

23 The parties have reached a plea agreement that would allow defense to recommend a
24 time-served sentence and Mr. Li would like to enter a guilty plea in accordance with that
25 agreement to move forward and resolve the matter. (Dkt. No. 218 at 3.) But an in-person
26 proceeding would require travel from Chicago, increasing the COVID-19 transmissions risk. (*Id.*

1 at 2.) Rather than delay a change of plea until COVID conditions abate, Mr. Li would like to
2 enter a plea now by videoconference. (*Id.*) He has a strong interest in the speedy resolution of his
3 plea process, and further delays would prolong the stress and anxiety he faces as the current
4 public health situation creates uncertainty for in-person court proceedings. *See* W.D. Wash.
5 General Order 01-22 (Jan. 7, 2022) (imposing limitations for certain in-person activities based on
6 the current COVID-19 situation).

7 The Court FINDS that, for the reasons described above, the plea hearing cannot be
8 delayed without serious harm to the interests of justice. Accordingly, the motion for a remote
9 change of plea hearing (Dkt. No. 218) is GRANTED.

10 DATED this 1st day of February 2022.

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John C. Coughenour
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE